

Dek Unu Magazine

December 2023



PAIRS

Howard Schatz



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Eleven

This is Dek Unu Magazine. In Esperanto, dek unu means "eleven." Eleven images from a single artist. Eleven artists in eleven solo issues in each publication year. Dek Unu publishes the work of a new artist-photographer in each issue. The artist's work and words are featured in individual focus as the sole purpose for each issue of the magazine. Unlike other arts and letters magazines which might look for work from a variety of artists to support an editorial staff's theme, at Dek Unu, theme and imagery are always each artist's own.

This Month

December's issue features award-winning artist-photographer Howard Schatz and images from *PAIRS*, his 23rd published book of photographs. These studio photographs explore the intentional combination of subjects: the visual, graphic, emotional, social, physical, and even spiritual dynamic resonating and resulting from human relationships. Mother and infant. Opponent athletes. Lovers. Self with self, duplicated by multiple exposures. Often two sides of a diptych are, themselves, pairs, introducing multiple lines of connection, adding extra richness to the visual and conceptual dialog. Simple or complicated, subtle or obvious, each image is technically perfect, exquisitely composed, colored, and choreographed; but each also brings a surprise, a creative pop, provided by its creator's unique vision.

Although they operate in different sensory realms, both musical duets and visual art pairs highlight the power of collaboration, resulting in works that are greater than either of the parts. Schatz, the composer, directs, and performs "duets" that often seem as intricate and polished as Mozart's and as absorbing and emotionally expressive as Schumann's. His arrangements are visual "art songs," always lyrical counterpoints of line, color, and concept, and always carefully tuned records of surprising, creative dialogs among the artist and his subjects. Each image reveals elegant harmonies, created by a virtuoso, that invite you to linger, to study, and to return for more.

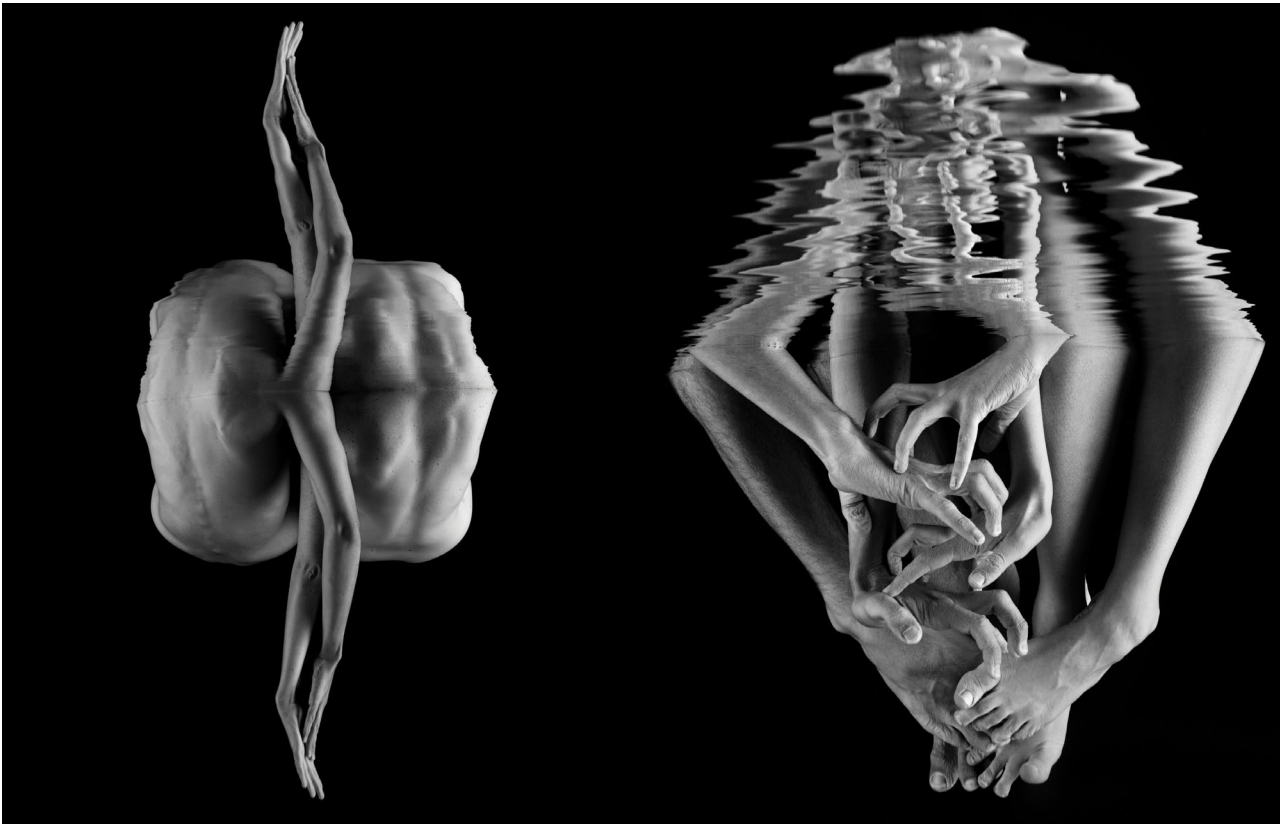
Dance Study 1378, Tap Dancer Chikako Iwahori
Beauty Study 1293, Model Natalia Costa

Use of double exposure to heighten the
dynamic interplay of color and movement.



Underwater Study 2830, Dancers Alison Clancy & Luke Wiley
Underwater Study 2845, Dancers Alison Clancy & Luke Wiley

Dipping part of the body into the water, and holding very still to minimize water ripples in the reflections makes for the formation of wonderfully beautiful and often strange human forms.



Beauty Study 1140, Model Natalie Walters
Liquid Light Study 1079, Camilla Thorsson

Each image required the utilization of color.

The image on the left: paint a la Pollack.

On the right, I used Karo syrup infused with fluorescent dye.



BodyKnot 256
BodyKnot, Cookies and Cream

A fascination with biologic sculpture and a wide angle lens led to the creation of unexpected human shapes.



*Underwater Study 3198, Dancers Elysia Fridkin & Amar Ramasar
Oscar de la Renta*

On the left, two ballet dancers facile and expressive underwater.
Right, the inimitable fashion designer, Oscar de la Renta,
dances with one of his creations



*Model Belinda Baidoo with newborn twins Elijah & Agnes
Newborn Study 1547, Eli Turrietta & newborn son, Nguyen*

Love is a wonderful thing.
The deep feeling of mother for her child transcendent.



Human Body Study, PAIRS 106, Dancers Elijah Dillehay & Holly Wilder
Human Body Study, PAIRS 112, Dancers Erica Messonnier & John Peterson

My work with these outstanding dancers to create these very special pairs was central to my motivation for my book – *PAIRS*.



Underwater Study, Dancer Katita Waldo, San Francisco Ballet
Underwater Study 225, Dancer Heather Nahser

Side by side, two of the great ballerinas with whom
it's been my honor to work.



Powder Study 1021, Model Belinda Baidoo
Beauty Study 1126, Model Emilie Adams

Using the human face as canvas opens
a world of creative possibilities.



NBN Study, Dancers Kimberly Bartosik & Wally Cardona

Here are two views of this pair of dancers.
They are seen first from one side and then from the other.



Underwater Study 259, Dancer Katita Waldo
Underwater Study 173, Dancer Tiffany Heft

Where water meets air a reflection is created,
thus the "pairings" in these underwater images.



Artist Interview - Howard Schatz

You wear many hats. When you're introducing yourself, how do you describe what you do?

I make photographs to surprise and delight myself it's a constant search. It is not hard to make a good photograph, but it is nearly impossible to make a spectacular photograph. My treasure hunt is unrelenting.



Howard Schatz

When did you start photography?

I have had a camera since 1960 and I carry it with me all the time. In 1987, I began to make photographs seriously in a studio once a week, Saturdays. I went to galleries, and bookstores, and bought any book in which there was an idea. I scheduled shoots of every sort.

How did you get started as a pro? Easy? Not so much?

Between 1987 and 1995, I received a lot of attention for my work in part because of the efforts of my very brilliant wife,

Beverly Ornstein, who got the work out there. Four books were published. There were over 20 museum shows and multiple gallery shows. We were in San Francisco at the time and we began to get calls from New York City about doing commercial and magazine work. We decided to take a sabbatical from my work in 1995 for one year and rented a studio in Soho. The year was exciting, thrilling, anxiety-provoking, and rich with experience. We had so much fun we would go to bed every night giggling over the incredible adventure and odyssey we were on. We decided to re-up for a year and continued to do that. To this day, Beverly says we are on our 24th year of sabbatical, but after five years in New York, in about 2000, I never looked back and we have been working together at this since then. *Pairs* is our 23rd book.

From idea to finished art, you're a master. How did you learn the craft?

I am project-oriented. I find something that interests me and then delve into it. Most of my interests have to do with people. My first project was an attempt to learn black-and-white photography; I worked on a project called *Gifted Woman*. My wife was the head of PBS in San Francisco, where she worked on many projects about women. We wrote to great women who were known for their accomplishments and asked them to come in for a portrait and interview. My first book, *Gifted Woman*, resulted from that work.

After that, I wanted to learn, portraiture in color and began a project on redheads. We had a card made up that said, "Redheads, a Book of Photographs," and handed it out wherever we went. My second book, *The Rapture of*

Redheads, resulted from that. All of the projects I have done have come about this way.

You often invest years in the development of a project. Among all of them, was any especially difficult, too little return on investment?

As with all things, some of the ideas and projects I began did not pan out to be very interesting, nor was I able to make images that excited me and I just let them go. There was still plenty enough to work on. I am currently working on a project called *The Shape of the NFL*. Accessing subject matter is a great challenge for all photographers and accessing professional football players has been the greatest challenge I have experienced in all my years of working. But, I am trudging on...

The theme of *PAIRS* has been a rich one for you. The book is big (365 photographs) and includes work from 30 years.

One of many areas of my ongoing interest has been the exploration of the relationship between two subjects: the visual, graphic, emotional, social, physical, and even spiritual dynamic resonating and resulting from such combinations.

I am in search of the electric, sometimes eccentric, and always compelling connections possible with a combination of two – whether dancers, athletes, mothers and newborns, gymnasts, or even inanimate objects. Sometimes they were brought together intentionally, but I've found other images that speak to each other in ways I had not previously noticed. The connections are sometimes subtle, sometimes not.

Your nudes, particularly pairs suggesting lovers, are beautiful constructions — pairs as one. How do you do that?

I have made images of the bodies of pairs, or a pair of bodies, for many years. When I began the exploration of pairs, I approached each session with some particular idea or emotional feeling in mind. As with the best explorations, I found that my subjects often helped me evolve my initial idea. I discovered quickly, when creating the first images of a pair of people, that an absolute necessity for success was a willingness of each person in the pair to explore along with me, and the intelligence to bring his or her input to the pictures.



NBN Study 1251, Models Tabitha Garza & David Berridge

In most cases, the two knew each other, though there were times when the two had never met. In either case, a feeling of comfort is an absolute necessity, first about themselves and their own bodies, and a trust that I would only put them together with someone equally dedicated to achieving serious and magnificent art. I did everything I

could to communicate clearly, sensitively, and confidently that we were going to make magic and that it was going to be fun, and if they came along fully for the “ride,” lots of fun.

Everybody with a collection of good work would like to publish in print. *PAIRS* is your 23rd book. What do first-timers need to know?



Book launch, *With Child*
Credit: Rizzoli

Having books published is a whole conundrum in a world of worms. It is very difficult. If somebody wants to get a book published, they need to identify as many publishers as they can, and then send out proposals. Five or 10 photographs in a paragraph or two. One should expect to get nothing back or to get rejection. That should not upset anybody. The goal of finding a publisher goes like this: "Somebody out there loves my work, and my job is to find out who that is."

I have learned almost as much by studying monographs and photo books, the work of others, as I have from making my

own images. I love looking at photography books. I have discovered, for my own capacity to retain visual imagery, that I must look, ponder, then look again and again. I've found that I gain more understanding with each visit to a book or a single picture. I now know that the very worst thing I can do is to close the book and put it on a shelf. The shelf is a killer. Shelving a book after one look almost guarantees it will never be opened again. Intended as a future reference source, the book instead becomes mere decoration. Having not been really studied, it sits neglected with other similarly once-seen monographs. Might as well give it away.

You have wide experience – editorial, advertising, fine art. How does your approach differ among the three?

Advertising work challenges the photographer to be a contractor, to fit the plans of the art director and client, and to solve the problems in as creative a manner as possible in the physical world. One makes someone else's images. Advertising pays a lot of money and it is understandable why photographers do it. I have done advertising for many years as a way of paying for my addiction to making my own fine art images. I am at a point where I do not look for advertising work and will accept only a very rare assignment if it is fascinating and interesting, and from which I will learn something.

As for editorial work, that has diminished tremendously because magazines have gotten thin and have disappeared; there's very little editorial work that remains. Most of my work, actually almost all of it, I do to surprise and delight myself. If the work results in sales in a gallery, a museum exhibition, or a book, that is just fantastic; but

for me, the joy is in the journey, in the discovery, in the making of the images, and experimenting and exploring, and trying every crazy thing I can in order to find that which is marvelous, magnificent, wonderful, original, and fantastic. I am only rarely successful but I continue struggling — a lot of it is great fun.

Talk about your creativity. Where do good ideas come from? What helps? Tips or tricks for the rest of us?



Credit: Scott Allen

Ideas come from everywhere, from everything. Just walking in the street, going to a movie, sitting in a restaurant. Talking with friends, looking at books, going to galleries and museums, dreaming. When something new presents itself to me that I could use in my imagery, I make a note of it. If I see something on my computer, looking at websites, I will make a screenshot, and I have a vast library of screenshots of the work of many others. I search for ideas, and it is perfectly fine to borrow someone's idea and morph it into one's own version of it.

I prepare very thoroughly, very thoughtfully, very tenaciously for every shoot I do. I do not just come into a shoot and wing it. I am ready with many, many ideas. Very frequently one idea will lead to something absolutely new, and that will lead to something even newer, and I wind up with something I never thought of in the first place. But I am prepared with ideas before I start, and do not hold myself rigidly to sticking to one thing. I am open and free to include and search every sort of stimulus that might help me explore and may result in imagery that I didn't expect and that I eventually and hopefully love.

You write a weekly journal about capital 'V' vision called, "On Seeing." How do you describe artistic seeing?

We all see differently. Everyone's vision is different. It is very much like fingerprints. It is important for any artist to work and define the best results they can make for themselves and try very hard not to think of what anybody else might think of it. If we begin to think about making images that will please others we will go astray. It is a mistake. We need to dig deep inside our own emotions, feelings, and visions in order to make the best work of which we are capable. It is hard to do because we sometimes send our work out into the world and hope that a bunch of strangers will love it. It is a terrible trap and one needs to try to avoid wondering what anyone else will think of their work. One must please oneself.

**Is there a particular someone sees your new work?
Someone whose advice is useful, worth hearing?**

Everybody needs an editor who loves them enough to be brutally honest. When you show your work to your

friends, they just want you to feel good and will say or do anything for that purpose. Your friends are not your editors and, although we all like a pat on the back, it does us no good in the creation of images that are to be special.

I have been blessed to be married to a woman who will tell me, absolutely honestly, whether a work is worthy.



With Beverly Ornstein

Here's an example: I will do a shoot. I will make hundreds of images. I will spend a few weeks editing. I will find two or three or four or more images that I feel are worthy and worth working on further. I will show them to Beverly Ornstein, my brilliant wife. She will look at the images I've edited and then, not infrequently and to my painful presence say, "Can I see the other images from the shoot?" She will then look at all the images from the shoot and say something like this: "Well, the shoot is well done. It

is well-composed. Everything's in focus and the exposures are just right. A lot of it works but there is nothing here that excites me. There's nothing here that is special or so original it is worth spending any time on.”

It is painful to hear that sort of thing, but it is needed. Everyone needs to find an editor like that who is knowledgeable, smart, has exquisite taste, and who will be honest. Brutally honest.

Artists, even artists with decades of practice, continue to grow and develop. How has your work changed over time?

My taste has become a little more sophisticated. I look at images all the time and have maintained a rather vast visual data bank. I have not seen everything, but I sure have seen a lot. Therefore it has become harder and harder and harder to make images that are original and different and special.

In the beginning, almost everything I did made me happy and I thought I was doing fantastic and making great Images. But now that doesn't occur. I sometimes go for weeks having made thousands of images without a single image that stands out or is different from things I've made before. I don't think it's a bad thing to be so particular and picky. I think it moves me to reach higher. It is just really dauntingly difficult.

**You seem to have done it all, but we know better!
What's new? What's next?**

I've had the satisfaction of seeing my images in many magazines, in advertising campaigns, on billboards, in 23

books, on gallery walls, as well as a few dozen museums, (most recently in the current exhibition *WHO SHOT SPORTS* at the Brooklyn Museum, curated by Gail Buckland). And yet I continue to wonder how all sorts of my pictures would look in all sorts of other places, in very large formats, being seen by countless individuals. This desire for even more exposure is embarrassing to admit, but I believe anyone who makes art has this desire, a fantasy rooted in real aspiration.



Installation #239 Madison Square Garden NYC - DeLisha Milton #10

Given the possibilities emerging from my own imagination, I've been working on and have created an illusion, an artistic fiction, that displays my photos in museums, in corporate lobbies, on buildings, and even in the New York subway. Though these installations exist in an imagined reality, it gives me the distinct delight of seeing what my photos would look like in a kind of dreamscape. And, it has become a project that pushes me to search for new and exciting possibilities.

Where would my pictures work best, fit most perfectly, and astonish those who might come upon them? The project has been fascinating, challenging, stimulating, engaging, amusing, and deeply revealing. I walk around with my camera asking myself: “Where does my work belong, and which of my photographs fits best into a given environment?”

A fantasy? Sure. But who knows? One day, perhaps...

To purchase *PAIRS*, go to: pairsbyhowardschatz.com



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